

Meagher County City Library

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HB 374 – Construction of New Local Libraries
House Appropriations Committee
January 30, 2007

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee;

For the record my name is Debbie Benedict and I am the director of the Meagher County City Library in White Sulphur Springs. I am in favor of HB374 and would like to thank Representative French and Senator Kitzenberg for bringing this bill forward.

Our library occupies a 2100 square foot building built in 1979. One-third of our library space is not in use because the floor is sinking. This portion was originally constructed over underground springs in unstable soils. Ceilings in this area leak during heavy snowstorms and rain. We strategically place buckets in certain areas to collect water. Interior walls no longer touch the floor and are suspended only by the ceiling. Two years ago the county commissioners closed this area to the public for safety reasons.

We now have a new leak in the ceiling of our supply room where our main computer server is located. New stress cracks are apparent in various parts of the building. There is insufficient lighting in the non-fiction area. We actually provide a flashlight to patrons who have trouble seeing the spine labels and titles. We have one donated rocking chair, two benches in the front lobby, and one children's table with eight small chairs that provide the only seating for our visitors. We set up a card table with folding chairs for book signings, job service visits, and for other occasions.

Three years ago a portion of the ceiling near the checkout desk fell through during library hours but this was able to be repaired. Past repairs to our closed area have actually caused the floor to sink at a faster rate. Engineering costs to assess our closed area range from \$20,000 to \$90,000. This assessment would only determine if the problem could or could not be fixed. We have reached consensus that remodeling is out of the question. November 2006 we began discussing the feasibility of relocating the library. We have toured available properties but to date none have met our needs. We are also inquiring into possible land parcels. Our county commissioners are involved and support our efforts and I have entered their letter of support into my testimony.

Our library has The Donald W. Johnston Library Trust Fund whose purpose is to assist the library in achieving long-term building and maintenance goals. The fund has \$22,054.03 to date. We do receive monetary contributions each month from our loyal patrons and community organizations. Since September 2006 \$900 has been donated to the library. These monies are being set aside for building needs. Smith River Realty just

announced that our library will be one of four organizations they will be donating to with their 2007 proceeds.

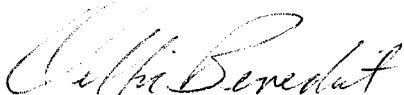
In the past month we received two special book collections. One was from our former newspaper owners Pat and Verle Rademacher who donated their entire history collection to the library. The other was from the family of a White Sulphur Springs resident who donated their mother's book collection. I mention this because these two collections together total 27 boxes of valuable books. Each week our wonderful patrons bring us best-selling books. I have 57 books donated this past week waiting to be catalogued and shelved. The problem is where to put them. We are discarding books but even so face a lack of shelving space. We have added all possible shelving.

Scott Ward, President of Russell Stover Candies visited our library last summer and later donated five computers. As elated as we were with his gift, frustration surfaced in deciding where to place them. Our high school VICA Club is designing and constructing a computer table for us. Once it is finished and the computers set up we will no longer have adequate meeting room space. Our library will soon have nine much needed public computers at the sacrifice of valuable floor space.

Instead of having all of our children together for summer reading program activities this year, we will have groups of 8-10 at one time because of space. In the past we have lined the children on the floor of our hallway to complete crafts because our children's area is crowded with 1-2 feet of walking space between tables and books. Computer users are asked to push in their chairs if we need to access books in back of where they are seated. At the present time 700 adults and children use our library each month and during summer months usage increases to 800 or more. This is amazing considering our entire county population is only 1900. In the past three months we have issued library cards to 38 new patrons. We face a huge challenge.

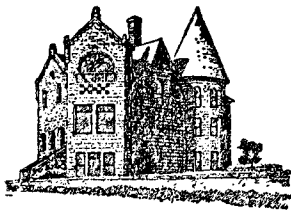
Our goals for a building are simple. One that provides adequate shelving space for current and future book collections, a children's area large enough to accommodate our youth after school and during activities, a computer room in an area separate from the bookshelves, a community room for various events, and adequate heat, air conditioning, lighting, and seating. I hope I have portrayed to you the challenges we face at our library and why passage of this house bill would mean so much. Thank you so much for this opportunity to present our situation to you.

Respectfully submitted,



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'The County With a Castle'

Meagher County, Montana

WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS

OFFICE OF
BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

January 29, 2007

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee I request this letter be entered into the record as a statement of support for HB 374 by the Meagher County Commission.

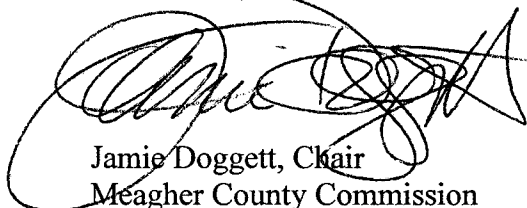
Meagher County has a city/county library in desperate need of renovation. Our building is literally sinking into the ground. We have consulted engineers, contractors and historians to find a way to correct the structure problem. So far no solution has been found, except to remodel, rebuild or remove the problem area. The county does not have the funds to do any of the above without assistance.

HB 374 sponsored by Representative French and Senator Kitzenberg will assist small libraries with necessary construction, renovation or remodeling costs. The Meagher County Commission strongly urges your support of this legislation.

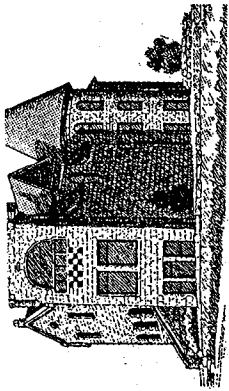
Our small rural library is a vital part of the community. Every month hundreds of local residents, traveling visitors and area students utilize the facility every minute it is open. People come to read the newspaper, check out a book, do a research project, and use the computers. The library must be remodeled or moved to accommodate this flood of users of all ages, and provide for a safer more productive environment for both staff and the public. Meagher County needs help with either a loan or grant to do the necessary construction or remodeling.

Please support HB 374. For answers to further questions or additional information please contact the Meagher County/City Library at 406-547-2250, or the Meagher County Commission at 406-547-3612 x 2, or Meagher County Commission chair, Jamie Doggett at 406-547-2190.

Thank you for your consideration.



Jamie Doggett, Chair
Meagher County Commission



The Meagher

MEAGHER COUNTY LIBRARY
PO BOX 5
WHITE SULPHUR SPRING MT 59645-0819

County Library

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH YEAR — No. 5 (USPS 336-620)

White Sulphur Springs, Montana 59645

Thursday, January 30, 2003

PRICE 75 CENTS

Meagher County/City Library suffers damage to ceilings and meeting room from settling

When librarian Trish Brown experienced falling ceiling tiles and a lighting fixture in the Meagher County/City Library recently, she became aware of other building faults of the library. Due to some of those faults, the library has been closed until engineers inspect the building for defects and unsafe conditions for those who use the library.

Some of those faults go back to earlier problems with the building.

The meeting room in the rear of the building has a three inch drop in the middle of the floor, caused by either water or underlying earth that has given problems for some time. The particular area was "mud jacked" in 1997 to take care of the problem. It has, however, returned.

Baseboards give a true line as to where the floor was before the settling took place. Those entering the room go from a flat surface to one that has a noticeable fall to the floor as you walk across the concrete.

Looking at the suspended ceiling

tile over the sunken spot, you can see brown water spots on some of the tiles. No one, however, has said that they can recall water dripping from the tiles.

Kyle Harlen, Helena building inspector, used a laser transit to measure the settling that was occurring in the room. The main area undergoing the settling was in the center of the meeting room. There was also apparent settling on some of the foundations, assuming they were level when originally put in.

Harlen used a ladder and found a noticeable sag in the ceiling. In addition to the heating and air conditioning equipment, there was a small satellite dish weighed down with numerous concrete blocks.

Numbers and measurements from the structural wood I beams were taken to research the loads they were supposed to carry.

The inspector felt that excavation should be done first to determine the ground conditions and the safety of the north meeting room area.

He had said to those inspecting

the problems that ten engineers could probably look at the problem and come up with ten different solutions.

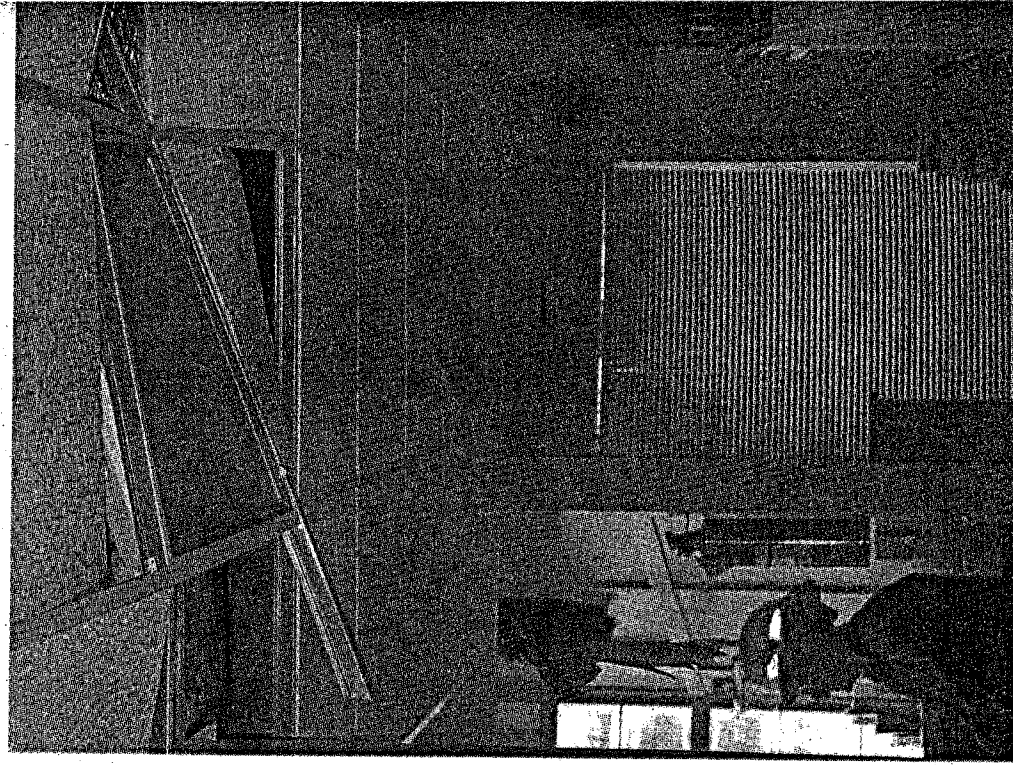
The drop ceiling needs to be repaired before anyone can use the building. That is a small item compared to the need to remove a plastic covering the paper faced insulation that was installed when the building was built. After removal, the paper faced insulation will have to be covered with a noncombustible material. This would have to be sheetrock or a metal foil.

The plastic covering never did meet building code requirements.

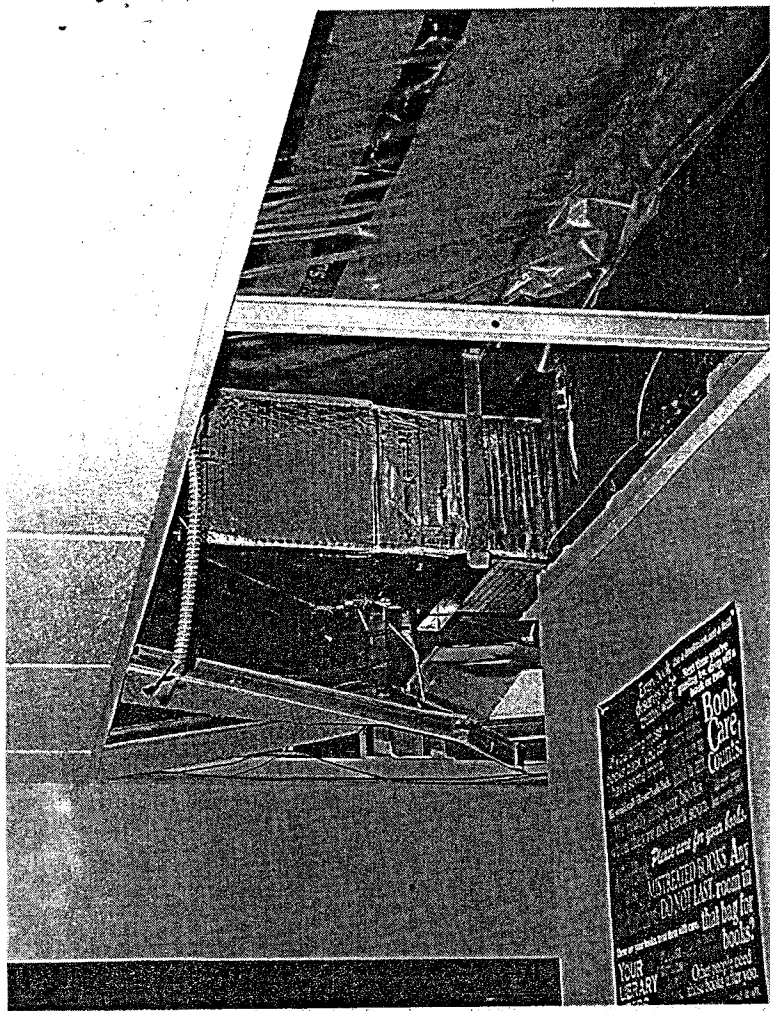
The lights and air ducts which have given the immediate problem which uncovered the rest of the non-compliance, will have to be supported from the structural members in the ceiling and not resting on the light duty drop ceiling.

The building was originally built as an office for CPA Patrick Buehner. Oswald Berg was the architect who designed the building.

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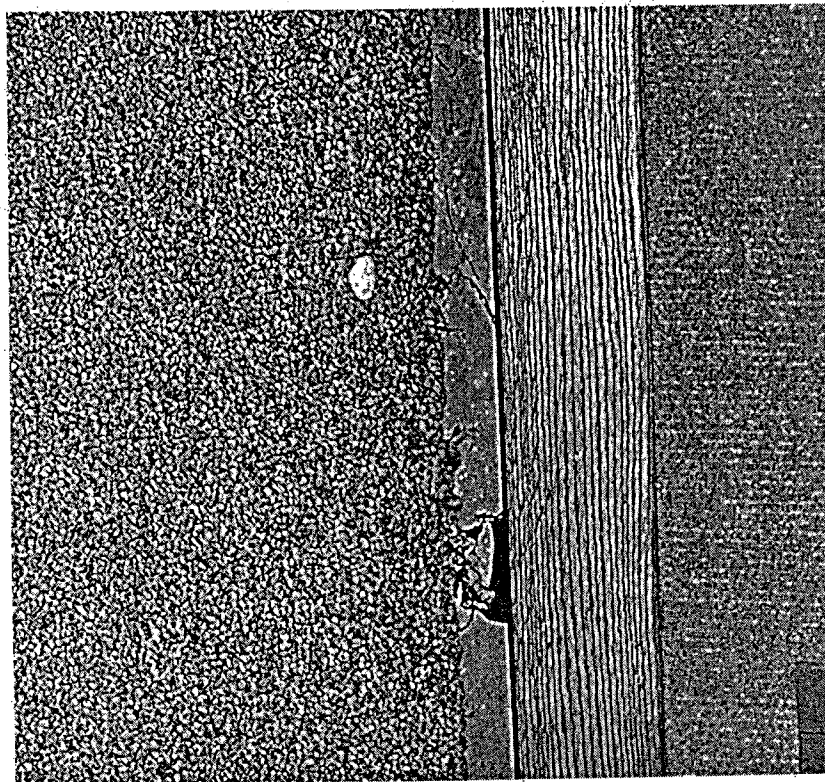
OTTO OHLSON, Fire Marshal, inspects some of the damage to the Meagher County/City Library Monday afternoon. The facility became dangerous to enter when lights and ceiling fixtures dropped through the ceiling, creating a hazardous situation to users.



LIBRARY CEILING has fallen, showing the plastic covering that was installed when the paper covered insulation was put in when the building was built. It is definitely not up to code and will be replaced.



CEILING LIGHT and debris litter the floor after it had fallen through the ceiling gridwork. The light was never properly installed and was relying on the ceiling tile to hold it in place.



FLOOR in the meeting room has sunk due to shifting of the underlying soils. This baseboard shows a three inch drop from the original level of the concrete floor.